

NSC BRIEFING

2 March 1955

CAMBODIAN KING'S ABDICATION

- I. In suddenly deciding to abdicate, Cambodian king Norodon repeats on a more positive scale a tactic he used to get his way from the French.
 - A. In 1953, after issuing an unprecedented blast against French policy during a stay in New York, he refused to return to his capital until French met his demands.
 - B. His present gripe is against both foreign and domestic criticism of his plans for constitutional reform.
 - C. Wants to replace elections scheduled for April with referendum which would decide whether or not constitution would be drastically revised in a manner which would virtually eliminate political parties in which there is considerable republican sentiment.
 - D. He conceives his program as a device to meet both demands of democracy and Cambodian desire for paternalistic monarchy.
 - E. King's particular annoyance is International Control Commission's concern with what he conceives to be purely domestic affairs.
 - F. Canadians, Indians, as well as British have charged his plan not compatible with Geneva agreement which called for elections in 1955 under constitution then in force.

- II. Norodon is thoroughly sincere and also highly sensitive to

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- A. Chosen for his job in 1941 by council or regents because he was related to both of two rival branches of royal family.

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C. After finally standing up to French, he won for Cambodia a considerable measure of real independence.

D. Abdication ^{IS} in favor of his father, Prince Suramint⁸ is irregular since Cambodian practice is for monarchs to be chosen by council of regents.

1. Suramint, never king, has had no active part in government for years past.

III. Doubtful that king intends to drop out of political scene.

- A. But Cambodian stability bound to suffer by his precipitate act.